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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2766
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1126
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1085
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2004
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3878
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2221
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2842
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2801
RUEHBD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0950
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001366

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: MAJOR POLITICAL PARTY UNDER PRESSURE

REF: A. SURABAYA 082

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 1321 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Golkar, the largest party in the Indonesian national legislature, is facing political problems. The party has failed to win--and often even place--in a series of recent gubernatorial elections. In addition, the party is generally not doing well in national opinion polls ahead of the 2009 elections. In discussing Golkar's problems, observers blame poor leadership and party factionalization, and a feeling that the party has an uninspiring platform and is tainted with money politics. All that said, it is way too early to count Golkar out; the party is well-funded and well-organized. END SUMMARY.

POOR PERFORMANCES

[1](#)2. (C) Golkar is facing political problems. (Note: The name of the party roughly translates as "functional group.") A key member of President Yudhoyono's governing coalition and the biggest party in the Indonesian legislature (with about 23 percent of the seats), the party has suffered a series of defeats (not winning once) in recent gubernatorial races, including in the following provinces:

- West Java (April 2008): Golkar finished third.
- North Sumatra (April 2008): Golkar finished fifth.
- East Kalimantan (May 2008): Golkar finished third.
- East Nusa Tenggara (June 2008): Golkar finished second.
- Central Java (June 2008): Golkar finished second.
- West Nusa Tenggara (July 2008): Golkar finished second.
- Bali (July 2008): Golkar finished third.
- Maluku (July 2008): Golkar finished fourth.

GENERALLY POOR POLL RESULTS

[1](#)3. (C) The party is also generally not doing well in

national polling ahead of the April 2009 legislative elections. (Note: The legislative elections are followed by the presidential elections in July 2009.) The National Survey Report (LSN), a well-respected public opinion outfit recently conducted a poll which showed the following:

- Indonesian Party of Democratic Struggle (PDIP) with 19.3 percent of support.
- Golkar with 16.1 percent.
- Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) with 9.0 percent.
- Partai Demokrat with 8.3 percent.
- National Awakening Party (PKB) with 4.5 percent.
- United Development Party (PPP) with 3.4 percent.
- National Mandate Party (PAN) with 3.1 percent.

14. (SBU) Other polls have shown Golkar dipping to as low as 12 percent. A recent poll, by Indonesia's Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), however, showed Golkar leading the pack with roughly 20 percent of support.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

15. (C) In asking about the party's political situation, contacts have responded that Golkar is suffering from poor leadership. Vice President Jusuf Kalla, the Golkar Chair, is not seen as particularly charismatic and is considered by many to have been ineffective in helping prepare the party for the recent gubernatorial contests. He has been seen as overly manipulative in backing certain politicians over others as Golkar gubernatorial candidates, for example. Akbar Tanjung, a former Golkar Chair, is seen as thoughtful, but he is also not charismatic and not very inspiring in public events. Agung Laksono, the Speaker of Indonesia's

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legislature and a Golkar leader, is seen as relatively effective in the arena of legislative politics, but is not seen as a effective national force for the party. Among its other leadership problems, the party also has serious internal disagreements among various factions. (Note: The Sultan of Yogyakarta is a Golkar member and currently a presidential candidate. While an influential figure, he has not been intimately involved in Golkar and its policies.)

16. (C) The party also comes off as a bit stale and uninspiring. Doug Ramage (AmCit--please protect), the head of the Asia Foundation Office in Jakarta, told us recently that "Golkar is just not projecting an image that it is ready to tackle the problems faced by the average person." Ramage went on to note that PDIP and PKS, two parties that have recently won gubernatorial races, had adjusted their platforms in light of recent price hikes in the area of fuel and food. These two parties, for example, have expressed concerns about these issues and how the situation impacts the average person. Golkar, however, has not done this as effectively, focusing its image more on being a party used to exercising power and sharing rewards, according to observers.

Q7. (C) Ramage went on to note that Golkar remained a party rooted in its past (it reached its heyday during the Suharto period when decisions were reached in smoke-filled rooms and elections were tightly regimented affairs). "Many Indonesians just seem to feel that the party is tainted with corruption and is old-fashioned," he remarked.

NOT TO BE COUNTED OUT

18. (C) Despite its apparent problems, Golkar remains a formidable force. Compared to other parties, it is traditionally wealthy--Golkar is said to have a large war chest ready for the 2009 elections. The party is also well-organized, with a vast network of party cadres. That said, the April 2009 legislative elections are coming up quickly and Golkar seems at the risk of being outcampaigned by PDIP and PKS, two parties that seem newly energized in the lead-up to 2009. Many Golkar operatives we have touched base

with know this and say the party is working to revamp itself.

19. (C) A poor showing by Golkar in 2009 could potentially be problematic for moderate-type politics in Indonesia--the party leans toward the secularist and is considered relatively tolerant. At the same time, it does not take extreme positions on international issues. Many Indonesians, however, do not seem to be responding to Golkar's style of politics, which may herald a shift toward a more responsive form of political engagement in the country.

HUME